



NASW

National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

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Testimony on 1178: An Act Expanding CT Paid Sick Days
Labor and Public Employees Committee
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Submitted by: Stephen Wanczyk-Karp, LMSW

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter the largest social work organization in Connecticut, we support bill 1178. Our state's current paid sick time law is outdated and very much in need of catching up to other states with stronger statutes.

Employers will benefit from bill 1178. When an employee is ill, they should not be at work. When an employee feels they have no other choice but to go into work sick, they are exposing others to whatever may be making them ill, possibly impacting other employee's health. The employee is going to be less productive and by reporting to work means their employer does not have the opportunity to try to fill in their position with another person who will be fully able to work. Having employees report to work when sick also has the likelihood of extending an employee's illness by not allowing them to take the personal care necessary to get better. None of these scenarios are to the employer's benefit. On the other hand, an employee who has paid sick time will realize their employer has their interests in mind and that makes for positive employee morale.

Typically, employment that does not offer paid sick time is for service-related jobs and other positions filled by lower income workers, often women and persons of color. This is in essence discriminatory and class based where those who are in the lower paying jobs lack the benefit of paid sick time that individuals in higher paid jobs and professions benefit from. The lack of workplace equity is unacceptable.

The bill calls for a minimum of 80 hours per year of paid sick time, an increase from current statute of 40 hours. For an employee working a 40-hour week, 52 weeks per year that is only 80 hours out of 2,080 hours of worktime. Surely this is not a hardship to an employer, yet to an employee it is of significant support.

Bill 1178 also takes the important step of clarifying that preventative medical care for mental and physical health is an allowable reason for use of paid sick time. A worker having the time to care for themselves by taking steps to prevent the onset of a health

condition or use of time for a mental health day, makes them best prepared to resume their work responsibilities.

Employees deserve paid sick time that gives them the peace of mind that if they become ill there is paid time that allows them to safely recoup. If a family member is sick the employee does not have to lose a day of pay to be home with a loved one. For example, a parent of a young child must stay home if that child is sick and too young to stay home alone. But taking care of that child means losing pay that is also needed to take care of the worker's family. Choosing between going to work sick or losing pay is not a choice that should have to be made. Employees should not be put in these lose/lose situations.

Our members work with individuals and families that struggle each day to make ends meet. Paid sick time will reduce stressors that can lead to anxiety and depression. It will allow individuals and families to better care for themselves and in so doing benefit all, including employers. We urge support for bill 1178.